(b) whether it is a fact that ISI is planning to revive militancy from U.S.A., Canada, Germany, U.K., France besides Pakistan as per latest intelligence inputs;

(c) if so, whether Government has taken up this matter with those countries to check the activities of militants; and

(d) if so, the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Government monitor all developments with a bearing on national security and have been taking measures deemed appropriate.

Starting of "Passport Seva" Plan

2708. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:
SHRI DARA SINGH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has initiated an ambitious "Passport Seva" plan to overhaul the way passports are being issued;

(b) the number of Passports including Passports under "Tatkal" scheme that were issued during the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 till January, 2008;

(c) whether before introducing new plan, Government had undertaken any study to emulate best practices available in other developed countries so as to cope with 18 per cent growth rate annually;

(d) if so, whether efficiency, security, training of employees, opening of more public dealing counters/passport outlets etc. to minimize passport delivery time, considered by Government; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The Government had entrusted the National Institute of Smart Government (NISG), Hyderabad, with the task of undertaking a time-bound study on the passport issuance system, including its IT aspects with the objective to deliver passport related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible and reliable manner. NISG has submitted its report, which has been accepted by the Government, and it has been decided to launch the "Passport Seva Project".

(b) The number of passports including passports under "Tatkal" scheme that were issued during the years 2005, 2006, 2007, and up to January 2008, are as under:

2005	2006	2007	January 2008
3570730	4441768	4941560	308368

(c) The time-bound study that was carried out by NISG included study of best practices available in other developed countries.

(d) and (e) As for efficiency, the Project is expected to result in the issue of passports within 3 days in cases not requiring police verification or those requiring post-issuance police verification; and in cases, which require pre-police verification, within 3 days after

the completion of the verification process. Tatkal passports are expected to be issued the same day. It is also proposed that the average time taken for submission of application by an applicant should not exceed 45 minutes. Police verification will be expedited through electronic linkage of the Passport Facilitation Centres with the police authorities in State Capitals.

As for security, in the Project, which has been elaborated in consultation with all concerned Government departments and agencies, only front-end and non-sensitive activities such as applications collection, data entry, acceptance of fee and capturing of photo etc., will be performed by the Service Provider selected through an open bidding process.

All sensitive aspects of passport issuance, including verification of documents, check-lists, the decision to grant a passport or otherwise and the handling of blank passport booklets will remain with Government employees as hitherto.

The new system under the Passport Seva Project will be introduced only after a comprehensive third party security audit by a Government agency. Such audit will thereafter be repeated every year. The data of passport holders will remain in the Government domain with strict access control. The ownership and strategic control of the core and critical assets of the project will remain with the Ministry of External Affairs. Data coming to the possession of the service provider, when the application is submitted, will only be used by him to feed the Government database and the service provider will be held strictly accountable for any misuse of data.

As for training of employees, the Project provides for training of all the employees of the Central Passport Organisation including IT skill enhancement and public dealing.

As for opening of more public dealing counters/passport outlets, the Project envisages setting up of 68 Passport Facilitation Centres all over the country and the number of public dealing counters countrywide will go up from about 345 at present to about 1250.

Fishermen captured by Pakistani Agency

2709. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the fishermen have been captured by Pakistani Security Agency in the last four years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps Government is taking for the returning of the fishermen?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes.

(b) The number of Indian fishermen detained by Pakistan in the last four years is:

2004—	852
2005—	460
2006—	365
2007—	124

436 Indian fishermen are in the custody of the Government of Pakistan at present.